



## LESSON 1.1.0 | OVERVIEW

Humans spent thousands of years as foragers moving from place to place in search of calories to keep everyone alive. Then, somewhat suddenly, in lots of places at about the same time, people discovered farming. What was that transition like?





## LESSON 1.1.1 | OPENING | EQ Notebook

### PURPOSE

Each unit of the Crash Course World History (CCWH) course is guided by an Essential Question (EQ).

You're learning a ton of stuff in this and every other unit, and it can be hard to keep track of what's most important. It would be pretty easy to become obsessed with a detail that, although interesting and a great way to impress people at a party is relatively unimportant. This activity will help you stay focused!

You'll think about the unit's EQ, and then you'll respond to it in writing. By journaling these questions and responses, you'll see how much you've learned as you move through each section of the course.

### ATTACHMENT

- [Essential Questions Notebook](#)

### DIRECTIONS

Think about this question:

*Was farming an improvement over foraging?*

Use the *EQ Notebook* – Unit 1 – Worksheet to respond to this question as best as you can. Be prepared to talk about these ideas with your class.



## UNIT 1 | EQ Notebook Worksheet

Answer the unit essential Lessons 1.1.1, then again in Lessons 1.1.5. In your answer, be sure to include ideas such as historical context and how themes through history change over time. Use specific examples to support your claims or ideas.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** | Was farming an improvement over foraging?

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| LESSON 1.1.1                   |  |
| LESSON 1.1.5                   |  |
| HOW HAS YOUR THINKING CHANGED? |  |



## LESSON 1.1.2 | ACTIVITY | Hunter Gatherer Menu — Big History Project

### PURPOSE

You'll do some research on foraging diets and our foraging ancestors might have used a variety of tools to hunt and gather. You have to choose menu items that a typical forager might have hunted and gathered in the location you specify. You'll learn about the variety of different food items available in certain areas and how early foragers would have procured these items.

### SOURCE \_\_\_\_\_

- [Big History Project](#)

### ATTACHMENT \_\_\_\_\_

- [Hunter Gatherer Menu Worksheet](#)

### PROCESS

Begin this activity by choosing a name and location for your imaginary restaurant, along with a date to correspond to when people would have been foraging in this location. Then research what a typical forager might have hunted and gathered in your geographical region in order to put together your menu. You must include information on the tools used to forage that particular food item as well as information about where the food item was located.





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## WORKSHEET | Hunter Gatherer Menu

Choose a name, location, and date for your imaginary restaurant. Using the information you've found during your research, put together a menu based on what a typical forager might have been able to find or catch at the time and region you've chosen. You must include information on the tools used to forage that particular food item as well as information about where the food item was located.

RESTAURANT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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Source: Big History Project. "Unit 6: Early Humans. How Did First Humans Live? Hunter Gatherer Menu" <https://www.bighistoryproject.com>. Web.



## LESSON 1.1.3 | READ | From Foraging to Farming: The Agricultural Revolution — Bridgette Byrd O'Connor

### PURPOSE

In this article, Bridgette Byrd O'Connor explains that for much of human being's existence we were roaming around gathering vegetation and hunting animals to survive. In what amounts to a blink of an eye, humans switched from foraging to farming. Historians have most often looked upon the introduction of farming as undeniably positive. Farming meant that people didn't

have to move around to follow their food and a steady source of food was available. But did farming improve people's lives?

### ATTACHMENT

- [From Foraging to Farming – The Agricultural Revolution](#)

### PREVIEW

Read the provided article and be ready to discuss major themes and topics following your completion of the reading.



## READING | From Foraging to Farming The Agricultural Revolution — Bridgette Byrd O'Connor

For 99% of the human race's existence on Earth, we were roaming around gathering vegetation and hunting animals to survive and by all accounts, we were pretty happy about it. Then about 10,000 years ago, humans around the globe gradually decided to change the way they acquired food. In what amounts to the blink of an eye when considering how long humans had been foragers, our entire way of life changed. This poses some intriguing questions for historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists: why did these early humans make the switch from foraging to farming and did farming really improve people's life?

Historians have long referred to the change from foraging to farming as the Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution. While this shift was indeed revolutionary, it wasn't a change that happened quickly like the American Revolution did for the colonists and their government in the course of a few years. It was a change that happened over thousands of years and also one that developed independently in several areas of the world. This, of course, leads to even more questions regarding the beginning of farming including why did people in isolated parts of the world decide to move from foraging to farming and was this a conscience decision or one that was brought on by necessity?

One of the most important causes of agricultural innovation came as a result of an increase in population and migration. Homo sapiens evolved in Africa, where they remained for the vast majority of the 250,000 to 200,000 years the species has existed. Around 80,000 years ago our ancestors journeyed out of Africa and began to migrate into all areas of the world, apart from Antarctica. These early humans spent their days foraging, hunting, taking care of their family units, and enjoying leisure time. They survived on what the land

provided and kept their numbers low in order to be able to move relatively quickly and easily. By the end of the last ice age about 12,000 years ago, humans inhabited all parts of the Earth. It was also at this time that temperatures became milder and the land in areas along large river valleys produced an abundance of food for foraging. This abundance led some humans to settle in one area for extended periods of time and as a result, their populations grew because there was more food and they weren't moving around as much. As populations increased, food surpluses decreased, which meant that the sedentary foragers had two choices: move into a different area for food or innovate.

While moving seems like the natural choice in this scenario, it wasn't that easy to do. In order to forage for a large group, you need a large land area. However, as sedentary foraging populations grew and people migrated to all corners of the Earth, the available land area began to shrink. If you can't move because another group is living nearby then you have to innovate to survive. Sedentary foragers also benefitted from learning about their local areas and observed what types of plants grew in certain locations and under what conditions these plants flourished. Armed with knowledge of their local environment, warmer climates to aid in food production, and the desire to be able to feed their families, early humans made the gradual change to agriculture.

Once humans learned which plants were easiest to grow and most nutritious (and tasty) for their bodies, they began to select those plants for cultivation. Humans began to change their environment to suit their needs and artificially select the species of plants that would provide the most sustenance. ►





Humans then became reliant on these plants for food while the plants relied on the humans, who made sure they survived through harsh weather conditions. A symbiotic relationship emerged between plant and animal. Domestication of animals followed the same pattern as humans came to learn which animals would make good companions on hunts and the animals that would be docile enough to contain in fences for secondary products such as milk, fur, and power.

The establishment of agriculture not only brought a steady supply of food to people but it also spawned a new way of life. Large-scale agriculture meant a surplus of food, and this food had to be stored and inventoried. People began to make pottery to store and transport food, develop a writing system for recordkeeping, build more permanent structures for homes, and trade with neighboring societies. This trade allowed for goods and ideas to move between different groups of people, which substantially increased collective learning, or the passing down of information from one generation to the next. The information and goods shared between people included the exchange of seeds and plants as well as farming techniques, which allowed for an increase in food production. Once a surplus of food is generated then it means a society's entire population does not have to focus on farming. People began to specialize in different occupations with some becoming potters, metalworkers, or business owners because all members of society no longer had to spend their days making sure they had enough food to eat.

Historians have most often looked upon the introduction of farming as undeniably positive. Farming meant that people didn't have to move around to follow their food and a steady source of food was available. Once people began to settle down and specialize in a variety of jobs this naturally led to the formation of cities, government, monumental architecture, and writing: all of the common characteristics of civilizations.

In essence, farming made people "civilized". While this overly positive view of agriculture is tempting to believe, civilization did not come without costs. In order to protect your new houses in the city with the recently renovated temple and market square, an army had to be organized with a ruler to make sure that everyone was doing their jobs properly. If you were lucky then you might live in a place like Egypt that had natural barriers to protect your city from attacks and a somewhat reasonable pharaoh, who ruled benevolently. If you were unlucky then you might live somewhere like Mesopotamia, where your neighbors waged war on a regular basis and your ruler issued a number of laws designed to scare you into being a good citizen.

Life as a farmer wasn't all it was cracked up to be either. Anthropologists studying foraging societies have come to the conclusion that the average forager spent about 12-15 hours a week gathering food while the average farmer worked from sun up to sun down every day of the week. The foraging diet was also considerably healthier as they selected meals from a wide variety of plants and animals in their local area while farmers relied on carbohydrate-rich foods such as wheat, rice, and potatoes for sustenance. While farming was usually seen as a more reliable way to ensure food for your family, a bad harvest brought on by weather, natural disasters, or a plague of locusts could devastate the entire city's crop and lead to widespread famine. Finally, as if that wasn't enough, farming and the domestication of animals led to an increase in diseases. Foraging communities moved around often enough to ensure they didn't get sick from contaminating their water or food supply with refuse. However, once people settled in one area permanently and kept animals in that same area then garbage and germs accumulated and spread.

Farming also contributed to class and gender inequality. The age-old struggle of the "haves" and the "have-nots" was



amplified once people began to settle down and accumulate possessions. Foraging communities were always on the move and consequently did not own many possessions. It's hard to envy your neighbor's stuff if they don't have any. While foraging societies were probably organized around an elder or respected leader, everyone had to contribute somewhat equally to ensure survival. Once civilizations were established, class divisions emerged and rulers usually gained power through wealth or force. This meant that some people could become wealthier at the expense of others, which led to inequality and, at times, war. The same problems existed for the division of labor between the sexes. In foraging societies, births were limited because it was difficult to carry multiple children when you moved around on a regular basis. Therefore, women weren't always relegated to the home, or domestic sphere, to look after children. Foraging women had to contribute their fair share in order to survive. Once people settled permanently, they were encouraged to have

more children, who would be able to help on the farm.

A woman's place then became the home and her husband became more active in the "public sphere", which led to a division of the sexes that persisted into the 20th century.

It is undeniable that agriculture issued forth a new era in the history of humanity. Complex civilizations emerged once people began to settle down. Monumental architecture was created along with great literary works, magnificent pieces of art, and scientific innovations, all of which accelerated collective learning through the exchange of ideas and innovations. Empires were built, progress accelerated, and the modern world was born. Agriculture was the stepping stone for the advancement of humanity but these amazing accomplishments were tempered with the rise of inequality, devastating warfare, and plagues. Humanity crossed a threshold from which there was no return.

*Sources;*

*Eppley, Felicia and Ellen Pike. "Big Era Three: Farming and the Emergence of Complex Societies, 10,000-1000 BCE." World History for Us All. PDF file.*

*Big History Project. "Unit 6: Agriculture." <https://www.bighistoryproject.com>. Web.*



## LESSON 1.1.4 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #1 The Agricultural Revolution

### PURPOSE

Crash Course World History #1 introduces you to one of the more significant revolutions in human history: the Agricultural Revolution. In this video, you will examine how archaeologists and paleobiologists are able to determine much of human history without written record. You will also learn advantages and disadvantages of farming, while theorizing how agriculture seemed to happen around the same time throughout the world.

Crash Course videos should be used as an introduction to new ideas and concepts, an instruction to core

ideas of the unit, and should serve as a reinforcement of previously learned events.

### LINK

- [Crash Course World History #1 – The Agricultural Revolution](#)

Watch the video on your own time, either at home, on your phone, or in the library.

### PREVIEW

In this first Crash Course World History video, John Green explores why early humans made the switch from foraging to farming. Foragers may have been healthier than early agriculturalists but the human desire for more food led to the invention of farming throughout the world, which then led to cities and civilizations. These decisions completely changed our world and way of life.

### PROCESS

Welcome to the most fun you'll have while learning about World History. Crash Course videos are an exciting way to learn new concepts or review ideas and events you've already studied. You should know that your host, John Green, speaks very quickly. Fear not! Your teacher can enable the captions and can rewind key moments when necessary. You are also encouraged to watch the videos multiple times. The first time through, just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, try to determine important facts and information. As you watch the video, consider how life and health of a forager compare to that of a farmer? What are the advantages and disadvantages of farming?





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## LESSON 1.1.4 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following questions to make connections across different concepts and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. In the beginning of the video, John Green discusses how humans have progressed from foraging to fast food in just 15,000 years. What factors allowed for this dramatic change to take place?
2. How does the surplus of food lead to the creation of cities and civilizations?
3. How do humans affect the population of certain species both positively and negatively?





## LESSON 1.1.5 | CLOSING | EQ Notebook

### PURPOSE

At the start of the unit, you examined the essential question without much to go on. Now that the lesson is over, let's revisit the essential question. This time, cite specific passages and evidence from the content in the unit that provide insights into answering the essential question.

### ATTACHMENT

- [Essential Questions Notebook](#)

### DIRECTIONS

Think about this question:

*Was farming an improvement over foraging?*

Use the *EQ Notebook* – Unit 1 – Worksheet to respond to this question as best as you can. Be prepared to talk about these ideas with your class.





## LESSON 1.2.0 | OVERVIEW

Starting with the early river civilizations of Mesopotamia, the Indus River Valley and Ancient Egypt, Crash Course World History looks at the transition from foraging to farming with all of the positives and negatives that came along with it. While there were important differences, these civilizations had a lot in common which begs some important questions about why these spots?





## LESSON 1.2.1 | ACTIVITY | Social Status, Power, and Human Burials — Big History Project

### PURPOSE

This activity provides you with an opportunity to start thinking about the impact that farming can have on the way humans live and relate to each other. It will also allow you to think about the kinds of questions archaeologists and historians might ask when they must rely upon artifacts rather than written evidence to learn about the past.

### SOURCE

- [Big History Project](#)

### ATTACHMENT

- [Social Status, Power, and Human Burials Worksheet](#)

### PROCESS

Your teacher will break the class into small groups and have each group quickly analyze a set of burial images. Look carefully at the images and use the worksheet to answer the following questions about each:

- Describe the burial: what does the tomb or grave look like? How was the body prepared? Were there any objects in the grave or tomb?
- What conclusions would you draw about the wealth, power, and social status of each of the individuals from these four burials? Explain the reasoning behind your conclusions.

After your group has had some time to think and discuss the images and you've completed the worksheet, your teacher will ask your group to share your answers with the whole class. Later in the lesson, you will have a chance to form a deeper understanding of how the way humans lived and related to others was impacted by the development of agriculture.





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## WORKSHEET | IMAGES | Social Status, Power, and Human Burials Chart — Big History Project

### EGYPT



*Image credit: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Attribution: Jack1956 at the English language*

### GREECE



*Image credit: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Attribution Eikenhein*

### XIAN



*Image credit: This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Attribution Rosemania*



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## WORKSHEET | Social Status, Power, and Human Burials Chart — Big History Project

|        | Describe the burial: What does the tomb or grave look like? How was the body prepared? Were there any objects in the grave or tomb? | What conclusions would you draw about the wealth, power, and social status of each of the individuals from these three burials? Explain your reasoning. |
|--------|---|---|
| EGYPT  |   |   |
| GREECE |   |   |
| XIAN   |   |   |

Source: Big History Project. "Unit 7: Agriculture & Civilization. Ways of Knowing. Social Status, Power, and Human Burials." <https://www.bighistoryproject.com>. Web.



## LESSON 1.2.2 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #2 – The Indus Valley Civilization

### PURPOSE

Crash Course World History #2 introduces you to one of the earliest civilizations: the Indus Valley. Once humans started banding together and had a surplus of food production, they tended to settle along rivers. Rivers gave humans access to nutrient rich soils in which to plant crops, provided food surpluses, and opened travel and trade with other established communities. What's special about the Indus Valley Civilization is the structures its inhabitants built: buildings designed to catch the wind to act as a natural air conditioner; elaborate drainage systems for plumbing and sewage; and a large public bath. You will learn that the Indus Valley had all the typical characteristics of early civilization.

Crash Course videos should be used as an introduction to new ideas and concepts, an instruction to core ideas of the unit, and should serve as a reinforcement of previously learned events.

### LINK

- [Crash Course World History #2 – The Indus Valley Civilization](#)

Watch the video on your own time, either at home, on your phone, or in the library.

### PREVIEW

In which John Green teaches you about the Indus Valley Civilization, one of the largest of the ancient civilizations. John teaches you the who, how, when, where and why of the Indus Valley Civilization.

### PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, watch the video before class. The first time through, just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, try to determine important facts and information. Remember that John speaks quickly and you may benefit from having the captions turned on. If you missed something, have your teacher pause or rewind the video. As you watch the video, consider how historians and scientists know what they know about the Indus Valley if we haven't been able to decipher their writing system. How might they go about studying what was left behind in order to formulate stories and a history?



## LESSON 1.2.2 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Think about the following questions as you watch the video.

1. What are the characteristics of a civilization and why can that term be problematic?
2. Why were the vast majority of ancient civilizations centered around river valleys?
3. Where was the Indus Valley Civilization located and why was this area such a great place to build a civilization?
4. When did this civilization flourish and how do we know about the people?



5. So what were some distinguishing characteristics of the Indus Valley civilization?

6. When did the Indus Valley Civilization decline and what happened to these people?

7. Why did these people decide to build a civilization here in the first place?

## LESSON 1.2.2 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following question to make connections across different concepts and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. After watching the video, use the space below to determine why studying civilizations of the past can help us figure out our own human nature. In other words, why study history?



## LESSON 1.2.3 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #3 Mesopotamia

### PURPOSE

As one of the earliest civilizations to create a writing system and a law code, Mesopotamia is an important area for you to study. By understanding the importance of record keeping and law making, students will learn about the characteristics of early civilizations.

Crash Course videos should be used as an introduction to new ideas and concepts, an instruction to core ideas of the unit, and should serve as a reinforcement of previously learned events.

### LINK

- [Crash Course World History #3 – Mesopotamia](#)

Watch the video on your own time, either at home, on your phone, or in the library.

### PREVIEW

In this Crash Course video, John Green explores the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, which gave us one of the first writing systems, established trade networks throughout the Middle East, and created one of the first written legal codes. The importance of religion, government, and social structures are also explored as vital characteristics of ancient civilizations.

### PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, watch the video before class. For your first time through, just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, try to determine important facts and information. Remember that John speaks quickly and you may benefit from having the captions turned on. If you missed something, have your teacher pause or rewind the video.

As you watch the video, consider how government, religion, trade, and language played a role in early civilizations.

How does a government's type of rule determine specialization of labor and overall success of a civilization?



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Think about the following questions as you watch the video.

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11. Why were the Assyrians so good at conquering and what was their most important legacy to history, according to John Green?

12. The Neo-Assyrian Empire lasted 300 years from 911 to 612 BCE, but why did it fall?

### LESSON 1.2.3 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following questions to make connections across different concepts and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. How did Mesopotamia's proto-socialist government contribute to the specialization of labor and the overall success of the civilization?

2. How does writing indirectly create social hierarchies and inequality?



## LESSON 1.2.4 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #4 Ancient Egypt

### PURPOSE

Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted a really, really long time and studying the characteristics of this civilization can help you understand the legacies of ancient history, geography, and religion.

Crash Course videos should be used as an introduction to new ideas and concepts, an instruction to core ideas of the unit, and should serve as a reinforcement of previously learned events.

### LINK

- [Crash Course World History #4 – Ancient Egypt](#)

Video questions for students to answer during their viewing.

### PREVIEW

In which John Green covers the long, long history of ancient Egypt, including the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, and even a couple of intermediate periods. He touches on the highlights of Ancient Egyptian history from pyramids to hieroglyphics to pharaohs, as he explains the importance of this culture and why it lasted for such a long period of time.

### PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, watch the video before class. The first time through, just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, try to determine important facts and information. Remember that John speaks quickly and you may benefit from having the captions turned on. If you missed something, have your teacher pause or rewind the video. As you watch the video, consider how the Egyptians were able to achieve all that they did in terms of art, architecture, science/math, and religion. What role does geography and natural resources play on an area and how can these forces shape are religious belief system?



## LESSON 1.2.4 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Think about the following questions as you watch the video.

1. Why is Ancient Egypt often the most remembered ancient civilization?
2. What river shaped Ancient Egyptian civilization and why was this river so beneficial?
3. How did the Egyptians view the afterlife?
4. How is Egyptian history divided? What is a pharaoh?
5. Why were the pyramids built and who built them?



6. What were other important aspects of Egyptian religious beliefs?

7. What was the writing system in Egypt?

8. What were some of the characteristics of the Old and Middle Kingdoms?

9. The New Kingdom period of Egyptian history was one in which the geographic borders of the civilization expanded. There were also three pretty famous pharaohs during this period. Who were they and why are they famous?

10. What does John Green refer to as the “really crucial thing about Egyptian culture”?



## LESSON 1.2.4 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following question to make connections across different concepts  
and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. What are a few of the approaches to studying history that John Green mentions at the beginning of the video?  
How can studying history from different approaches or perspectives be both good and bad?

2. How can the geography and natural resources of an area shape the religious beliefs of a civilization?



## LESSON 1.2.5 | READ | What Does It Take To Be a “Civilization”?

Dr. Anne Chapman

### PURPOSE

This article brings together ideas discussed in the past three videos. Our current way of life is rooted in the complex societies, traditionally called civilizations, that originated in Afro-Eurasia between about 4000 and 1500 BCE. Many of the integral features of our own world developed in these societies during this period.

We have inherited from the builders of those societies

many fundamental ideas and inventions, including urban living, the state, social class hierarchies, writing, institutionalized religion, mathematics, astronomy, and wheeled transport.

### ATTACHMENT

- What Does It Take To Be a “Civilization”?

### PROCESS

Read the provided article and be prepared to discuss themes and details from what you’ve read. If you need to go into greater detail, make sure to write down information that still needs clarification. We’ll discuss everything in class.





## READING | What Does it Take To Be a “Civilization”? – World History For Us All — Dr. Anne Chapman

The earliest societies that have been called “civilizations” emerged in the river valleys of Afro-Eurasia. The first did so soon after 4000 BCE along Mesopotamia’s Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A few hundred years later, one existed in Egypt’s Nile valley, and some 500 years or so after that in the valley of India’s Indus River. China’s Yellow River valley witnessed the rise of complex society around 1700 BCE.

In the Tigris-Euphrates valley between about 7000 and 4000 BCE, exploitation of the environment intensified. Villages spread into less easily farmed areas, such as river valleys. Here floods left fertile mud in their wake, but drainage was often needed. Arid plains beyond flooded areas could be made productive only by building irrigation works. Large-scale cultivation of nut and fruit trees began. Farmers learned how to use animals not only as a one-time source of stored meat and hides, but as continuing sources of milk, wool, and fertilizer. In Mesopotamia, animals began to be used to pull carts and plows. More efficient sickles of flint, then of copper and bronze, all made from imported materials, replaced earlier ones made of native baked clay.

As food resources grew faster, so did human populations. Land close enough to water for irrigation and close to settlements to make transport feasible became more valuable. Marked differences in wealth developed. Shifts in watercourses, both natural and human-caused, led to conflicts between communities. The need to predict, direct, and use the spring river floods led to the need for large-scale cooperation and to innovations in water management engineering.

Along the edges of the more intensively farmed areas, and in some pockets among settled communities, marsh

or desert dwelling hunter-gatherers maintained older ways of life, intermittently trading with sedentary populations.

Human impact on the environment became increasingly varied and widespread. Landscapes were transformed from natural to man-made. Marshes were drained. Trees gave place to cereal crops. Orchards and date palms grew where only scrub had existed before. In lower Mesopotamia over-irrigation turned some soils salty and barren. Native animals in some regions were deprived of their habitat. Towns and villages intruded on farm land. Problems of sanitation and crowding in fast-growing settlements put people in greater danger of disease and infection. With population ever denser after 4000 BCE, leaders built massive artificial hills as foundations for temples, citadels, and palaces.

Human relations became more intense and complex. Both people and resources became more concentrated. In early cities, rulers collected agricultural and commercial resources in centralized storage places, where they could be guarded and their gathering and distribution controlled.

In southern Mesopotamia, the area known as Sumer, the number of settlements identified grew from 21 to 123 between 4000 and 3000 BCE. The average size of settlements grew about fivefold, and the first cities arose. During the third millennium, an estimated 80 percent of the population was urban. In Egypt, there were similar increases in the numbers and sizes of settlements at about this time. Egypt, however, remained more village-based than either Mesopotamia or the Indus valley. In the Nile valley fewer cities developed and the population was spread more evenly. ►



The new cities were more than just enlarged villages. They were hubs in wide-flung trade networks, promoted by the new availability of ox-drawn carts and boats. In cities, artisans, laborers, and merchants concentrated. Cities became centers of manufacturing. New technologies were used such as alloying and casting metals for tools, weapons, and luxury goods. The wheel allowed for mass production of pottery.

Surplus resources allowed the emergence of full-time specialist occupations in the cities. Some of these jobs were concerned with organization and management of people and resources: rulers, government officials, scribes, and soldiers. Others were in artisanry, manufacturing, and trade. Specialists such as priests, priestesses, and religious officials acted as intermediaries between the people and the gods and goddesses. Some city-dwellers continued to farm, walking to nearby fields. People who lived in the countryside came into the cities to trade, deliver tribute to the temple, or work on large-scale building projects.

Cities became hubs of both local and long-distance trade. Sumer is known to have imported timber, marble, metals, and semi-precious stones. References to “boats from Dilmun (modern Bahrain on the Persian gulf) bringing ivory, gold, carnelian, and lapis lazuli” appear in Sumerian royal inscriptions of the third millennium BCE. Archaeological evidence shows that sea trade connected Mesopotamia to the Harappan civilization of the Indus valley. There is also abundant evidence of thriving trade between northern Mesopotamian cities and both Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Iran.

Around 3000 BCE, Sumerian-style cylinder seals, architectural techniques, and art motifs appeared in Nile delta settlements. Soon after, Egypt was importing marble from the Red Sea

coast, copper from the Sinai Peninsula, cedar and cypress wood from Lebanon and Syria, and ebony and ivory from sub-Saharan Africa. Egyptian-made stone vessels of various dates before about 2000 BCE are known from excavations in Syria, Palestine, Crete, and Greece. Both in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the ruling class financed and controlled long distance trade and also benefited most from it. But in Mesopotamia the merchants who acted as the rulers’ agents are known to have traded also on their own behalf. They also made loans to government.

Hierarchy was another hallmark of emerging complex societies. After about 4000 BCE, the social structure in densely populated regions began to resemble pyramids. At the top of this pyramid were the most powerful political and religious leaders and the wealthiest landowners. They had a grip on power, rights, privileges, and prestige, all backed by religious ideas. Just below the top were the elite officials, managers, and high-ranking military officers. They saw to it that rulers’ wishes and policies were carried out. Below this group was a minority population with special skills or with wealth gained in manufacturing or trade. The broad base of the pyramid included the vast majority of peasants and laborers, a class that had few possessions, rights, or life options. Slavery became widespread in Mesopotamia after about 2800 BCE. Many slaves had lost their freedom by being captured in war.

In Mesopotamia, women’s inferiority to men was taken for granted, but they shared the social standing of their fathers and husbands. Up to about 2000 BCE, they benefited from some measure of equality. In both Sumer and Egypt women occasionally served as rulers or held high office. Priestesses could command exceptional wealth, prestige, and power.

Women generally inherited equal shares of land with men, could own property, could sue in the courts, and worked in many jobs outside the home. Towards the end of the third



millennium, however, an increasing emphasis on the importance of armies and conquest and on trade and manufacture as sources of wealth meant that women were increasingly excluded from the most valued occupations. Laws increasingly defined them as dependents and restricted to the home. In one Sumerian city-state, any woman speaking disrespectfully to a man was ordered to have her mouth crushed with a brick. The number of women in government or religious positions in Egypt, and in supervisory positions in Mesopotamia, declined.

States emerged in response to the need for central regulation that could be backed up with systematic coercion on a large scale. The ability of states' rulers to regulate and coerce was typically religiously supported, and buttressed by a near-monopoly of force that could command labor, tribute, and taxes. Rulers of states organized and financed public services, arranged for religious ceremonies and festivals, maintained irrigation works, controlled stores of food for famine relief, administered justice, and in some places issued written law codes.

Priests governed the earliest city-states in Mesopotamia on behalf of the city's chief god or goddess. Priestly power to coerce seems to have been based on both religious ideas and on economics because the temples controlled surplus grain and other commodities. In the third millennium, a secular leader typically replaced these religious authorities. Originally called something like "big man," he was soon described as "king." His power was based on control of the military, and his position became hereditary. A city-state normally only controlled its local hinterland of towns and villages. But city-states often warred with one another over territory and resources.

The kings of some city-states claimed to have united the whole of Sumer in southern Mesopotamia at various periods down to about 2200 BCE. At that time, Sargon became ruler of the Semitic city of Akkad in central Mesopotamia. His armies conquered all the independent Sumerian city-states. One document records that "5400 warriors ate bread daily in his presence." He established the first multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural empire that stretched from the Persian Gulf to Syria, Turkey, and Iran. His successors began to call themselves divine. Within a few generations his empire crumbled, but others followed in the second millennium.

Egypt's rulers were successful military leaders first, emerging from generations of conflict between rival towns and regions. From about 3100 BCE, the entire Nile valley from the great Delta upriver to the first of several cataracts (steep rapids) was united under a Pharaoh proclaimed as divine. His rule and that of his hereditary successors depended on the support of the powerful priesthoods of the various gods, enormous wealth based on taxes and tribute, and a monopoly of force. After about 1,000 years, central authority weakened, but from about 1570 BCE, a new dynasty arose that created an Egyptian empire extending far upriver and into Southwest Asia.

Some kind of central authority, perhaps a state, almost certainly existed in the early Harappan civilization of the Indus valley. This is suggested by the existence from around 2500 BCE of cities scattered over hundreds of miles sharing similar urban layouts with parallel streets intersecting at right angles. There is also evidence of uniformity in the size and shape of bricks, weights, and pottery. However, no direct evidence of central rule has been found: no palaces, no elaborate royal tombs, no depictions of monarchs, no inscriptions that anyone can read.



Perhaps the most significant and enduring innovations that peoples of the early civilizations contributed to history were in the realm of ideas. The people of these civilizations invented writing, developed abstract thinking in mathematics, worked out ethical codes, and experimented in the arts.

Writing emerged as a system for recording information. It overcame the inaccuracy and impermanence of memory, eased communication between widely separated people, promoted the flow of information, and made possible both the cumulative storage and the control of knowledge. According to our most reliable current information, the earliest written records appeared in Mesopotamia on clay tablets about 3,600 BCE, though some tantalizing recent evidence suggests that Egyptians may have been the first writers. Writing appears on seals in the Indus valley dating to about 2,600 BCE. In China, the earliest evidence is on bones and bronze vessels dating to around 1,600 BCE.

The earliest written signs were pictures (pictographs) of objects and notations of quantities. Gradually, the objects came to stand for ideas, such as an image foot to represent the idea of walking. Eventually, sounds of words that identified objects began to be used to write concepts for which pictures could not be made. An hypothetical example in English would be to combine the pictograph for “bee” with the one for “leaf” to create the abstract word “belief.”

Writing was hard to learn because a scribe had to remember thousands of symbols. Eventually, the number of signs was reduced from thousands to hundreds, and their forms simplified. In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, knowledge of writing remained restricted to the higher ranks of society, and almost entirely to men. Knowledge of writing became quite widely used in Sumer for both commerce and government, mostly to record quantities of goods received, rations given

to workers, and agricultural products distributed. In Egypt, writing was for centuries concerned mainly with royalty and religion. Most Harappan inscriptions, which have not been deciphered, have been found on seals and apparently used to identify ownership. Monumental architecture and art were symbolic expressions of hierarchy and concentrated public power. Architecture also demonstrated technological, mathematical, and engineering know-how. Examples from the fourth and third millennium include city walls, palaces, temples, and tombs. Particularly well known are the ziggurats, or temple towers, in Mesopotamia; the pyramids of Giza in Egypt; and the citadels and great water tank in the Indus valley. The ziggurat of the Sumerian city Ur, built the third millennium, was 150 feet by 200 feet at the base, and 80 feet high. Egypt’s 481 foot Great Pyramid, which served as a Pharaoh’s tomb, was built at about the same time. Its 2.5 million twenty-ton limestone blocks were cut to within 0.01 inches of being perfectly straight.

Works of art were also produced as symbols of wealth and status. Many were deliberately designed to make forceful statements about the majesty of gods and rulers, to communicate socially approved ways of behavior, and to reinforce the social and religious hierarchy. Others were purely decorative. In all of the early civilizations, the arts reached very high levels of skill, creativity, and sophistication.

Religious ideas heavily influenced behavior. In the societies whose writings we can read, we know that people believed in many gods (about 3000 of them in Mesopotamia). These were typically associated with forces of nature (sun, sky, earth, and certain animals such as the bull). In Egypt, an afterlife depended on divine judgment confirming that the deceased had lived a good life and on preservation of the corpse, along with grave goods that would ensure its comfort. ►



Mesopotamia's afterlife was a loss of identity in a shadowy world of sadness. Each god had priests and priestesses that served it. They organized and carried out the rituals that celebrated, made sacrifices to, and requested favors from the divinity. They also supervised public worship, which often involved impressive spectacles.

The first evidence for the use of mathematics comes from Sumer in the fourth millennium. This society adopted both a decimal (10-base) system, later abandoned, and one based on the number 60 and its fractions and multiples. In both systems, the value of an individual number sign depended on its placement in the entire number (as in 1111, the

first 1 stands for a thousand, the next for a hundred.). The Babylonians in the third millennium worked easily with fractions and solved quadratic and cubic equations. Babylon employed a calendar with a year of 360 days divided into 12 months, a week of 7 days, a day of 24 hours, and hours and minutes divided into 60 parts. Egypt's calendar had a more accurate year of 365 days, divided into 36 ten-day periods with an extra five days tacked on. Both societies practiced systematic astronomical observations, keeping records of eclipses, new moons, and motions of the planets. They used mathematics to calculate and predict the behavior of heavenly bodies, which were thought to influence human events on earth.

*Source:*

*Chapman, Dr. Anne. "Big Era Three: Farming and the Emergence of Complex Societies, 10,000-1000 BCE. River Valleys and the Development of Complex Societies in Afroeurasia 4000-1500 BCE." World History for Us All. PDF file.*